



# redeemed

bible in 3 & 1 Corinthians 5-7

SCPC term 2 2008

## sunday 22nd june 2008

### study 7 GOD, SEX & MARRIAGE 1 Corinthians 7:1-24

KEY VERSE FOR SERIES: "...you are not your own; you were bought at a price..." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

The Corinthian church was very mixed up about a lot of things, especially issues of sex and sexuality. Yep, they're a lot like us. In chapter 5 we saw an extreme example, but then saw last week in 6:12-20 that sexual immorality was a widespread problem in the church. Greek philosophy placed a big emphasis on the 'spirit' as all important and the body as not important. The Corinthians, as we saw, seemed to somehow combine that view with the fact that you can eat what you like (in the new covenant) to come up with a view that you can do what you like with sexual appetites too – it's only your body: do what you like. Paul had to remind them that we will rise bodily, that the Spirit lives in our body, that Jesus redeemed our bodies—bodies matter! This week as we hit chapter 7 the issues are similar but at the other extreme. While some of the Corinthians are saying, "bodies don't matter, so sleep around" ... others are saying "bodies don't matter, so don't have sex at all". That was their take on spirituality: rise above such appetites and be celibate. So engagements were being called off, widows were being told not to re-marry, people were becoming Christians and thinking they should leave their 'dirty' non-Christian spouse behind, and even married couples were going celibate. Paul carefully addresses all these situations (we'll address singleness next week), while all the time trying to remind the Corinthians that true spirituality is about defining yourself in relation to the Lord Jesus, not sexuality. One way or the other they were making sex their Lord rather than something that came under the rule of THE Lord. And that is the challenge for us.

#### some notes on questions

Q1. The NIV translation of another Corinthian slogan in verse 1 may cause us to misunderstand verse 2. The alternative translation in the footnote is truer to the original: "it is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman". Paul will address the 'whether to get married' question later in the chapter—from verse 25—we'll look at that next week. The immediate question in these verses, however, is about the sexual relationship of the *already* married. So the 'having' of verse 2 simply leads in to the more detailed instructions of verse 3-5 that a husband and wife should 'have' each other—they should continue in an active sexual relationship and forget this nonsense that sex is unspiritual. I think that's Paul's real point in mentioning prayer in verse 5: t They're defining spirituality in terms of sex rather than the Lord. Prayer is how we acknowledge the true Lord.

Q2. It's important that we don't come away from these passages with the view that is so common in society that the Bible is anti-sex. It is anti-sex outside of the context God gave it for: one man, one woman married for life. The Bible is very for sex in that context. And notice, not just for procreation but for giving to the other.

Q3. Some were taking this wrong notion of spirituality further and not only abandoning sex but their marriage. Paul is clear that divorce must not be pursued by a Christian. Reconciliation is always the goal—that is the heart of who we are as Christians—reconciled people.

Q4. Notice from the end of verse 39 that Christians must marry Christians. But Paul is addressing here the issue of the person who has become a Christian but their spouse hasn't. On the Corinthian view of spirituality this person would make them even dirtier than sex! Paul calls them to think in the other direction: stay and God might use you to bring them to him.

Q5. "Stay as you are" is the call. Paul rebukes them for their "grass is greener over there" attitude. Above all he turns their attention to the Lord and that they should define themselves in relation to him. Notice how verse 23 repeats 6:19-20. Jesus' blood is worthy of obedience.